

THE KEY POLITICAL DECISIONS OF THE MILITARY GOVERNMENT
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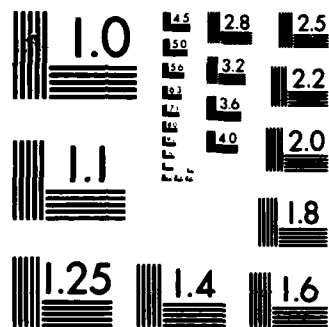
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THE KEY POLITICAL DECISIONS OF THE MILITARY GOVERNMENT IN TURKEY
SEPTEMBER 1980-NOVEMBER 1983 AND THE IMPACT OF THOSE DECISIONS

BY

COLONEL ROBERT F. HERVEY, SC

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The Generals administered the country for slightly over three years. During that time, they not only successfully ended the violence, they also made a number of key political decisions concerning the basic structure of the government and the nature of politics within the society. They opted for a civil government operating under an elective mandate, revised constitutional authorities, limited political organizations and activity, new political actors and a new system of military oversight.

A postscript briefly outlines developments since November 1983 and suggests that the decisions have been largely successful in the short term; however, more time is needed to insure the validity of such basic changes.

The author concludes that successful civil government in Turkey must meet three criteria; it must insure domestic tranquility, it must advance economic development, and it must remain politically viable. If any future government fails to achieve those goals, the armed forces could again intervene.

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**The Key Political Decisions of the Military Government in Turkey
September 1980–November 1983 and the Impact on Those Decisions**

An Individual Study Project

by

Colonel Robert F. Hervey, SC

**Colonel James M. Meredith
Project Advisor**

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**US Army War College
Carlisle Barracks, PA 17013
May 1985**

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ABSTRACT

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In the two years preceeding 12 September 1980, more than five thousand Turkish citizens were violently killed by other Turkish citizens. These were primarily political murders, reflecting the bitter hatred between extreme rightist and leftist political factions. The enmity had infected almost the entire society - schools, universities, unions, police forces, media, even the government bureaucracy were all largely stagnated by the threats or acts of violence. The principal political leaders refused to cooperate to end the killing. On 12 September 1980, the five ranking leaders of the Turkish Armed Forces took over the complete administration of the country. They did so in spite of the tradition of not mixing active military duty with politics. However, their action was historically justified by the mission assigned to them by the founder of the modern Turkish Republic Mustafe Kemal Ataturk, to protect and preserve the nation in accordance with its basic tenets.

The Generals administered the country for slightly over three years. During that time, they not only successfully ended the violence, they also made a number of key political decisions concerning the basic structure of the government and the nature of politics within the society. They opted for a civil government operating under an elective mandate, revised constitutional authorities, limited political organizations and activity, new political actors and a new system of military oversight.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

I feel compelled to introduce this document by insuring that the reader understands a few basics regarding this authors point of view.

I and my family, lived in Turkey for almost six years between 1972 and 1984. I was there when Mr. Ecevit was an upset victor in the 1973 elections, which also saw the true political emergence of Mr. Erbakan and Colonel Turkes. I was there during the horror between 1978-1980, engendered by terrorism, murder and the combination of the worst winter in fifty years (1979-80) and the strangulation of an economy unable to provide fuel at any price. I was there in 1982-1984, as the key decisions were made and carried out to return the government to civilian administration following three years of military control. During one of the interim periods, 1976-78, I served as the Turkish desk officer for current affairs in the Defense Intelligence Agency.

I relate this experience for two reasons. First, so as to give some slight authority to my opinions as based on personal observations, as well as the combined views of many knowledgeable friends and acquaintances.

Second, so that I may state flatly that I have not been unaffected by my relationship with this country and its people. From the accusation of Turkophile, I do not shrink. I would argue, however, that my Turkishness and genuine fondness for that country does not detract from the objectivity of my views presented here, or elsewhere. If these views appear to be pro-Turkish, then it is because I believe the circumstance warrants such a view; if on the other hand a view is critical, I would only hope that my Turkish friends understand.

Finally, let me warn the reader that this paper is not inclusive. I do refer to events and personalities without significant elucidation in footnotes. Therefore, some modicum of knowledge about Turkey's modern era is presumed.

While many officials and friends, Turkish and American, have contributed their knowledge and opinions to my research, this work is totally my own responsibility. No endorsement or approval, official or unofficial, was sought or received for the final form of this paper.

CHAPTER II

THE SETTING

For the third time in less than twenty years, the Turkish military took over the government on 12 September 1980. The existing administration was dismissed, political activity was suspended, martial law and military rule-by-decree were enacted. Neither the Turkish populace nor the observing diplomatic community were surprised. Most thought that the takeover was long overdue.

The military acted according to its chain of command. The leader of the intervention was the Chief of the Turkish General Staff, General Kenan EVREN, who was the senior military officer of the nation. He was supported by the next four most senior officers, respectively the Chiefs of the Army, the Air Force, the Navy and the Gendarmerie. The entire military establishment responded to their orders without question or hesitation.

The intervention had been well planned and was conducted efficiently and without bloodshed. Virtually every political, governmental, bureaucratic and social institution was immediately brought under military control or shut down. Within the first weeks after 12 September, thousands of persons associated with those institutions were dismissed. Some were detained, and a few arrested.

The intervention was enthusiastically endorsed by the vast majority of the Turkish citizenry. Only those taken into custody were disgruntled. Initially, at least, even most government officials and politicians were relieved that the military had finally stepped in and assumed governmental powers.

The military leaders justified their intervention by citing the

Internal Services Code of the Armed Forces which obligates the military to "protect and safeguard the Turkish land and the Turkish Republic as stipulated by the Constitution".¹

The necessity for such protection was the almost complete breakdown of law and order. Terrorism, robbery and murder had become the common methodology of competing anti-systemic elements. The fact that those elements had direct and significant political influence, brought responsible governmental processes to a virtual halt, unable to respond to either the violence or its base causes.

Referring to the terrorism, General Evren included the following statement during a television explanation of the intervention on 12 September.

"My fellow countrymen,

As a result of all these and similar causes and many other reasons that you are well aware of, the Turkish Armed forces have been compelled to take over the administration of the State in order to protect the integrity of the country and the nation, the rights and liberties of the nation, to remove fears by providing the security of life and property, to ensure prosperity and happiness, to reinstate the supremacy of law and order in other words, with the objective of reestablishing and preserving the State authority in an unbiased manner. For a temporary period of time, from this day until the foundation of a new government and legislative body, the legislative and executive authority will be in the hands of the National Security Council comprising of the Commanders of the Army,

¹ 12 Sept in Turkey (Ankara: Ogun Kardesler Printing House, 1982), p. 224.

Navy, Air Force, and Gendarmerie under my chairmanship."²

On 16 September, General Evren conducted a press conference during which he listed six somewhat overlapping objectives for the military administration.

1. To safeguard the national unity,
2. To establish security of life and property by curbing anarchy and terror,
3. To establish and safeguard the authority of the state
4. To establish social peace, national understanding and unity.
5. To secure the functioning of the republican regime based on social justice, individual rights and freedoms and human rights.
6. To reestablish civil administration after completing the legal arrangements in a reasonable time.³

Approximately three years later, on 6 November 1983, nationwide elections were conducted and a civilian administration was returned to power. Parliamentary government was restored, a new Constitution was in effect and a measured democracy emerged.

In slightly over thirty-six months, Turkey had been transformed from near total chaos to a constitutionally ordered society, with a government mandated by the free will of a majority of its citizens. Some observers classified this transformation as a miracle. Some others were more skeptical.

² Ibid., p. 229

³ Ibid, p. 237

THE POLITICS

On 11 September 1980, Turkish society was virtually out of control. The central government, moribund by totally incompatible coalitions could do nothing to restore order. The faint hope that the two principal political actors, Suleman Demiral, a conservative and Bulent Ecevit, a social democrat, could unite to form a grand national coalition, marked by bipartisan discourse and compromise, was dashed by the irrational and destructive personal enmity between the two men.⁴ This single, well known and dominant factor gave powerful influence to minority, political elements who sought a basic reorientation of Turkish society.

These elements were well aware that they could not bring about the changes they sought by working within the system. Therefore, they resorted to intimidation and terror; in so doing threatened the very existence of the State. It was their irrational hope that in the anarchy which they created, their particular brand of authority would come out on top. The far left was splintered and to an extent self-destructive, but their composite effect on Turkish society was very strong. They had increased their rolls by being able to radicalize a significant proportion of the country's social democrats. They had infused the bureaucracy, the universities, and the unions in great numbers. Their philosophy was confusing, reflecting their divergent benefactors, but came out a simplified communist credo for man-in-the street understanding. . . The will of the people supreme; sharing land,

⁴ Kenneth MacKenzie, Turkey Under the Generals (London: Institute for the Study of Conflict, 1981), p. 14 & 15. General Evren and the Force Commanders sent a letter to the Party Leaders, through President Koruturk, on 27 December 1979. The letter demanded that all political parties unite in confronting "anarchy, terrorism and secessionism." 12 September Turkey, p. 160-161.

wealth and opportunity; a society of equals; the bringing down of the rich and powerful. That the radical left had no single, dominant leader is not surprising. The communist party was officially outlawed in Turkey, and a prominent communist leader would almost certainly have been marked for arrest. Rather, a substantial portion of the far left remained sheltered under the mantle of Mr. Ecevit and his Republican Peoples Party. Numerous advocates of the far left were, therefore, able to spread their radicalism from sheltered positions within the legitimate political structure. It can be argued that Mr. Ecevit himself became increasingly radicalized ⁵ as the internal situation worsened, and especially after his ouster from the Prime Ministership in October 1979.

The far right had two champions, each anti-systemic in approach.⁶ The fascist was retired Colonel Alpaslan Turkes, a shadowy figure who had sought to establish a far right authority in the aftermath of the 1960 military intervention; and instead had been dismissed from the Army and exiled. In the 1970's he emerged again to create a near fanatical rightist political party, the Nationist Action Party. Marked by virulent anti-communism, the party was the breeding ground of, and the guiding hand to the "Idealist Youth," a group which resorted easily to violence and is logically compared to the Brown Shirts of the Nazi

⁵ 12 Sept in Turkey, p. 15

⁶ I would argue that there is a relevant application of Professor Giovanni Sartoris theory of party systems to the Turkish case, especially in the 1979-1980 time frame. G. Sartori, Parties and Party Systems A Framework for Analysis (Cambridge Eng: Cambridge University Press, 1976).

Party during its rise in the 1930's.⁷ The second figure on the right, Necmettin Erbakan, was even more formidable, in that he gained a much larger political following, and therefore wielded heavier clout within the political system. His source of strength was his self-proclaimed status as the leader of an Islamic revival. That a religious appeal gained such quick and sizeable support in the early 1970's, surprised many observers. This was, after all, Ataturk's Turkey, and one of the key principles of that heritage was a pro Western, secularist State, unburdened by the rigidity and regressive force of Islamic fundamentalism⁸. Nevertheless, Erbakan came forcefully onto the political scene in 1970, and by 1973 had garnered sufficient voter strength to hold the parliamentary balance of power for the remainder of the decade. His anti-West, anti-US positions, coupled with a call for the return of religious law and authority, found a receptive audience outside of the urban elites who had governed the nation, and led Turkey to strong economic and cultural ties with the West.

⁷ Clair Sterling, The Terror Network (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1981) Ms. Sterling espouses that the terror was initiated by the left in the early 1970's and was supported by the Soviets through Palestinian, Kurdish, Armenian and Bulgarian surrogates. She further notes that while the right responded with an equally vicious and sinister program of terror and murder, once the killing started there was a heavy influence of Islamic macho and tribal social codes which demanded revenge. It was my view that in an atmosphere where terror became commonplace, a significant percentage of the murder in rural areas and townships was non-political and based on ancient ethnic, religious and family animosities.

⁸ A good discussion of the tenets of Kemalism is contained in Walter F. Weiker, The Turkish Revolution 1960-61 (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution 1963), p. 3-4.

THE MILITARY AND POLITICS - THE TRADITION

Mustafa Kemal Ataturk was a professional soldier who as a Division Commander led the successful Turkish repulse of French, British, and Commonwealth forces at Gallipoli in 1915-16. Following World War I as Turkey was being dissected by the victors, he led the remnants of the Turkish Army into their War of Independence, which culminated in a victory and preserved the Turkish nation geographically almost as it exists today. Then in 1923, assuming the mantle of political leadership, he put aside his uniform, established the Turkish Republic and served for the next fifteen years as its President.

The reforms that he instituted during those fifteen years are beyond the scope of this paper.⁹ However, one aspect of his philosophy must be explained, as his view of the relation between political activity and military service has had a profound effect in the modern era. The essence of that viewpoint has been extensively reported.¹⁰ At the Salonica party congress of the Committee of Union and Progress in 1909 Kemal espoused the unwelcome argument that Army members ought not to be Party members; one person could not simultaneously fulfill both roles either physically or philosophically. He called on all officers who wished to be politicians to resign from the Army and advocated a law prohibiting active officers from political affiliation. He argued that a politicized officer corps would devote inadequate time to its military duties; likewise a deputy or party official ought to be singly concerned with his political duties. To emphasize his commitment to

⁹ There are a multitude of sources available on the Ataturkian reforms. See bibliographic entries for Robinson, Lewis, Kinross.

¹⁰ Richard D. Robinson, The First Turkish Republic (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963), p. 236 and Lord Kinross, Ataturk The Rebirth of a Nation (Nicosia: K. Rustem and Brother, 1981), p. 38.

this ideal, he resigned from the Committee, resumed his military duties and did not again enter the political arena for more than ten years. Further evidence of Ataturk's believe in the separation of political and military duties came in 1923 when he assumed the office of the Presidency of the newly established Republic. He embarked on a policy of civilianization, forcing his supporting entourage to discard their uniforms as his own official photograph, taken in white tie and tails, was widely distributed. More than symbolic, he further broke the relationship by promoting a Constitutional provision prohibiting Assembly members from holding a second government position. The effect was that the numerous officers who were then representatives to the Assembly either resigned their seats or their commissions.

It is from this basis, that the separation of political and military roles became traditionalized in Turkey. The strength of this Ataturkian legacy has been evident into the modern era despite the fact that the armed forces have intervened politically three times. In some measure, it could be argued that the first two interventions (1960 and 1971) were ultimately unsuccessful in part due to the military's desire to pass administrative control back to the civilians too quickly.

However, there is another side to this tradition that must be recognized. The military establishment has wielded significant political influence, and not just by coup or threat of coup. That influence has been manifested in several ways. For example, in considering the separation of political and military roles, the reference is to active duty, uniform wearing officers. From Ataturk onwards, there has been no regulatory prohibition against officers entering politics after either resignation or retirement. The fact is that while not overwhelming, a significant number of officers have

followed a post-retirement political career and have, therefore, influenced the government in matters of concern to the armed services.¹¹ A second and important source of military influence has been the office of the Presidency itself. While that role has varied in its real political significance, it has always been extremely important symbolically. And, as a behind the scenes manipulator, the President has usually been able to be heard and considered. Of Turkey's seven Presidents since the Republic was established, six have been retired Generals.¹² That not only suggests a military bias, but also has afforded the opportunity for access to the presidency by the active military leaders.

A final note to the traditional military-political relationship must be understood. Within the multitude of Ataturkian charges for the future welfare of the nation, the military accepted the role of protector of Ataturk's principles, and as the final arbiter to decide when those principles were violated. While historically, that aspect of military involvement in politics has not been overly significant, it is in the current era perhaps the single most influential factor. In discussing the decisions made by the National Security Council between 12 September 1980 - 6 November 1983, an understanding of this key role must be appreciated.

¹¹ Roger Paul Nye, The Military In Turkish Politics, 1960-73 Saint Louis: Washington University Press 1974), p. 43-44.

¹² Turkey Yearbook 1983 (Ankara: Director General of Press and Information), 1983, p. 83.

CHAPTER III

THE DECISION MECHANISM

The mechanism of decision making during the three year rule of the Generals has not been sufficiently described so as to be subject to comprehensive analysis. It is clear that the officers who played key roles during that time want it that way. The fact that the decisions of the 1980-83 National Security Council are legally protected from public criticism, and that laws exist to protect the military participants from any future examination or liability for their actions, speaks for the Generals desire to keep substantive information on the process of policy making from public view. Nevertheless, some basics are discernable and in the broadest sense only, are described below.

It is clear that the leader of the coup was General Kenan EVREN, the Chief of the Turkish General Staff. From mid 1979, when planning began for the intervention¹³ through the parliamentary elections in November 1983, General Evren was the unquestioned authority of the total military establishment, and provided both the real and the inspirational leadership for their actions. General Evren was elected President by national referendum in November 1982. Though he retired from the military at that time, he remained as Chairman of the National Security Council until it was disbanded following the Parliamentary elections in November 1983.

¹³ MacKenzie p. 10. Also M. Ali Birand, 12 Eylul Saat : 0400 (12 September, Hour of 4:00 a.m.) (Istanbul: Karacon, 1984, p. 30, 64. Birands book has yet to be translated into English, but provides a very authoritative source for the planning and events leading up to the coup. Birand writes that in 1978 a special 2-3 man study group was instructed to respond to two questions, Is an intervention necessary?, What would the basis (foundation) of such an intervention be? The group was under the direct control of the Deputy Chief, TGS.

He was loyally though not always quiescently supported by the chain of command, beginning with the Service Commanders and downward through the complete military structure. One of the more aggressive groupings among the officers, advocating the intervention in the first place and stern measures for the repression of terrorism in the second, was the Corps Commanders¹⁴ though at no time did they either question their orders from above, or suggest bypassing or replacing that senior authority. Even among the five members of the National Security Council, composed of General Evren and the Service Commanders; General Ersin, Army, General Sahinkaya, Air Force, Admiral Tumer, Navy, and General Celasun, Jandarma, there were differences of opinion, usually related to the issue of how to deal with dissidents and former politicians.¹⁵ But the fact remains that the military, except for some lower ranking elements who had been affected by left-right politics¹⁶, was loyal to the senior leaders. This stands in stark contrast to the 1960 coup, which was essentially a coup of Colonels not Generals, and the 1971 intervention which was conducted so as to preclude action by dissident elements below the

¹⁴ Birand p. 113. The corps commanders were generally designated the regional martial law commanders as well. In 1980 one of the Corps Commanders complained to me that he had half his corps standing guard or walking the streets. He said there was no military training at all. Also many of the corps commanders complained to General Evren that the restraints placed on their martial law duties by Mr. Ecevit's "martial law with a human face" program, made the whole function a farce.

¹⁵ It was generally thought within the inner circles of the government that Generals Ersin and Celasun called for a harder line in dealing with former politicians.

¹⁶ On the left, a number of reserve officers, lieutenants, were dismissed due to political activity as were a small number of cadets at the Army Military Academy. The rightist influence in the military was evidenced by the collusion of several junior rank officers and NCO's in the escape of rightist assassin Mehmet Ali Agca from Kartal/Maltepe prison in 1980. Agca went on to shoot the Pope in St. Peters Square in 1981.

senior levels.¹⁷

The structure of the National Security Council is somewhat shadowy. The fact that it did change to fit its additional responsibilities as the military rule extended, does not help in attempting to define it. Below the level of the top five decision makers, were the workers beginning with the Secretary who was initially General Haydar SALTIK. General Saltik had previously served as General Evren's deputy chief at the General Staff and is generally described as the principal planner of the intervention operation.

The NSC probably had no more than thirty officers working directly for it, at any one time. However, there were additional posts filled by civilians, particularly lawyers and some academics, and the NSC could call on the full support of the General Staff itself if additional manpower were needed. The NSC was subdivided into committees whose primary function was, at least in the first year after the intervention, to draft, get approved, and promulgate the decrees under which the affairs of government were conducted. The NSC essentially assumed full executive and legislative authority.¹⁸

Immediately following the coup, the principal political appointees in each ministry were dismissed. Within a week, however, the NSC named a new twenty-six member Council of Ministers whose function was to operate the Ministries on a day to day basis. The designated Prime Minister was the recently retired Chief of the Navy, Bulend ULUSU. Interestingly only four other members of the Council were retired from

¹⁷ Some comparison between the three interventions is presented in the discussion of the decisions made by the NSC.

¹⁸ C. H. Dodd, The Crisis of Turkish Democracy. (Hull (Eng): The Eathen Press, 1983), p. 43.

the military; the remainder were civilians, either from the career civil service or the private sector.

By July of 1981, ten months after the intervention, General Evren and the NSC were ready to proceed with a plan for restoration of a representative democracy. It was a graduated plan, according to no specific time table. The first step was the calling of a 160 man consultative assembly, whose members were ultimately approved by the NSC. As General Evren himself noted on the first anniversary of the intervention, the consultative assembly's first task would be to revise the 1961 Constitution. Following its approval a new Political Parties Law and a new Election Law would be written. Also, the combination of the Constituent Assembly and the NSC would be titled the Consultative Assembly, and would pick up the complete legislative task.¹⁹

The Assembly came into being in October 1981, and performed the functions laid out for it until the parliamentary elections were held in November 1983.

The administration of Martial Law, which had been declared throughout the country on 12 September 1980, was strictly a military affair directed from within the General Staff and carried out through the chain of command, by the designated regional authorities who were all military commanders. The National Police, after being dragged through a political cleansing process, were subordinated to the Martial Law authorities.

¹⁹ Turkey From 12 September 1980 To 12 September 1981. Speech by General Kenen EVREN. (Ankara: Directorate General of Press and Information, 1982), p. 37-38. He notes that in the first ten months of NSC operation 214 bills had been passed, with another 78 bills under consideration.

CHAPTER IV

THE DECISIONS

Several observers and commentators of recent Turkish events have three fold categorized the actions of the Generals, incorporated as the National Security Council (NSC), during their three years in power. First, to reestablish order by the vigorous repression of all those who practice or encourage violence; second, to restructure the government by writing a new Constitution and to recast it by barring the old political players; and third to depoliticize the society.²⁰ Generally, the specific decisions discussed below fall into one of these categories.

1. To intervene. The decision to intervene was made by General Kenan EVREN with the strong encouragement of the Service Commanders and chain of command. The decision was taken due to rampant lawlessness and the inability of the civilian government to deal with it. Considering the lethality of the terrorism (20 deaths per day by mid 1980) it is surprising that Generals didn't move sooner. The Turkish Ambassador to the United States Doctor Sukru Elekdag responded to this saying the the Generals wanted to make sure that the intervention was completely necessary. They did not want to be accused of interfering with lawful political processes and they were concerned about international reaction if they did step in. Also the Generals realized that intervention in 1980 was much more difficult than in earlier years; society was much more complex, social institutions were more powerful and more diverse, concepts and anticipation of social progress and development so much more common. Ambassador Elekdag concluded that it was a great shock that the military had to step in, as

²⁰ Lucille W. Pevsner, Turkeys Political Crisis (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1984), 97-98.

institutional democracy representative of a diverse society had worked in Turkey. But it was not working on 11 September 1980 - there was no other choice.²¹

2. To take over the complete administration. Whether or not the Generals fully appreciated the scope of the effort they were undertaking at the time of intervention, they made it clear that the total administration of the government at all levels was to be brought under their control. Some 1700 local mayors and council members were ousted as their duties were assumed by appointed provincial governors and staffs. Within the first year over 18,000 civil servants were dismissed or reprimanded in some fashion. In virtually every facet of public life, some means of personnel evaluation and control was established. Special attention was devoted to former politicians as will be discussed below. The important aspect of this encompassing decision to take over completely was that the Generals knew that a limited operation, as the 1971 Coup by Memorandum when the administration was not taken over by the military, would not due, if for no other reason than the terrorism and violence had permeated so completely public institutions. On the other hand, it is doubtful that the Generals saw themselves as social reformers bent on finding solutions to the problems of social immobility, land redistribution, tax inequity, educational inopportunity, an ageing population, and economic stagnation. Rather, in straight forward terms, the military sought to reorder the political and social institutions so that these problems could be maturely addressed by a responsible civil government in the

²¹ Private interview with Ambassador Sukru Elekdag, Dec 5, 1984, Washington, D.C.
maintain that order²² and ultimately

²² Dodd, p. 42

future. The military's complete takeover had as a first priority to reestablish law and order; second, to seek a reordered political structure that could control political participation.²³

3. To return the government to civilian control. Despite the argument that the civilian administrations implanted and elected after the 1960 and 1971 military interventions were ultimately unsuccessful in maintaining order and progress, General Evren and his compatriots were relatively quick in announcing their intention to return the government to a civil administration; though, as noted previously it is likely that they saw the return path to elected government as longer and in a different direction than was followed in 1961 and 1973. Turning their critical view inward, the Generals were also willing to suggest, at least privately, that the failure of the civil governments in the 1960's and 1970's may have been partly due to inadequate or misdirected actions by the military during their periods of tenure following the interventions.²⁴ Certainly, there are a variety of reasons that can and have been chronicled for again seeking to establish stable civilian government. But the plain fact is that despite the somewhat checkered history of democratic processes in Turkey, the majority of the people are committed to those processes. As Walter Weiker notes in discussing the urge to return to civilian control after the first military intervention in 1960, the most important reason was that "the country's democratic institutions quickly began to assert their continuing vitality."²⁵ That the Generals in 1980-1981 meant to control or at least direct that vitality became quickly apparent to all observers.

²³ John H. McFadden, "Civil Military Relations in the Third Turkish Republic" The Middle East Journal, (Winter 1985), p. 70

²⁴ Private conversation in Ankara, 1983. Source name withheld.

²⁵ Weiker, p. 85.

That most Turkish citizens willingly accepted those controls bears out the claim of Nick Ludington and former US Ambassador Jim Spain that, "most Turks will support strong government and political restrictions if these measures bring economic and social stability."²⁶

4. To write a new Constitution. As early as the 12th of September 1980, General Evren publically announced that a new Constitution, followed by new Election and Political Parties Laws, would be drafted and enacted.²⁷ When he addressed the newly formed Consultative Assembly in October 1981, he spoke of the preparation of a new constitution as being their first order of business. He also cautioned that the previous constitution carried a large part of the blame for the conditions which arose in Turkey prior to 12 September, and while drafting the new Constitution members should "always bear in mind that while trying to enhance and protect human rights and liberties also the State itself has certain rights and obligations as far as its continuity and future is concerned, that we do not have the right to put the State in a powerless and inactive position, that the State cannot be turned into a helpless institution".²⁸

The previous constitution, drafted in 1961 in the aftermath of the first military intervention, was a statement against the 1950's style of Turkish dominant-party government. It was a very liberal document calling for broad freedoms and autonomy for both citizens and associations, and meant to severely restrict government authority.²⁹ With such a constitutional basis, during the late 1960's and 1970's a

²⁶ Nicholas S. Ludington and James W. Spain, "Dateline Turkey: The Case for Patience" Foreign Policy. Spring 1983, p. 162.

²⁷ 12 of September, p. 231.

²⁸ 12 of September, p. 375.

²⁹ Dodd, p. 64.

wide variety of divergent political philosophies emerged and formed into political associations. As explained by John McFadden, "The effects of this were debilitating. The polity fragmented and became polarized into camps espousing mutually exclusive ideologies. Because of the proportional representation system, no party was able to obtain a majority in the Assembly and the legislative process bogged down."³⁰ As early as the late 1960's and early 1970's, attempts were made to amend that Constitution. In 1972, arguing in favor of proposed constitutional amendments that would have strengthened governmental power, then Prime Minister Nihat Erim called the 1961 Constitution a luxury that an under-developed country like Turkey could not afford.³¹ In May 1980 an article appeared in a responsible publication called the New Forum, which proposed a significant constitutional reform.³² While not going as far as the 1958 French Constitutional reform, it did advocate a much stronger presidential executive, and limited both individual and associational rights. That the article later served as a model in the drafting of the 1982 Constitution is generally accepted, though the drafters followed the model more in concept than in detail.³³ Work actually commenced on the new Constitution shortly after the convening of the Consultative Assembly in October 1981. A committee of fifteen members was appointed, headed by law professor Orhan Aldikacta. Their draft emerged in July 1982. It was reviewed and approved with relatively minor changes by the full Assembly and then passed to the Generals for review prior to the calling of a national referendum for

³⁰ McFadden, p. 69.

³¹ Faroz Ahmed, Turkish Experiment in Democracy 1950-1975 (London: C. Hurst & Company, 1977), p. 295

³² Aydin Yalcin & Adnan Kafaoglu, "Rejim ve Anayasamizda Reform Onerisi" ("A Reform Proposal for our Regime and Constitution"), Yeni Forum (New Forum), May 15, 1980.

³³ Dodd, p. 74.

final approval.

The Committee's draft, as modified by the full assembly, responded to the guidance and the cautions of the Generals. It increased the powers of the President, it streamlined the legislature, it conditioned the rights of citizens and associations to the common good and welfare of the state, and it provided a means for the current members of the National Security Council, the five Generals, to play a continuing influential role in affairs of State after the return to civilian government.³⁴ Of particular interest was the provisional article which called for the Constitution's approval by national referendum, with a positive vote likewise confirming General Evren as the first President of the new Republic for a seven year term.

The final review of the Constitution by the Generals produced only minor structural changes; it did, however, produce a political bombshell. As a provisional article of the Constitution, the Generals codified the banning of virtually all officials who had belonged to any of the pre-12 September 1980 political parties, from any political activity for a period of ten years. The Generals clearly meant for new political actors to take the stage.

5. To seek new political players. The Generals flatly blamed the four principal party leaders and their associates for contributing to, and in Col Turkes' case instigating, the pre 12 September violence. The Generals felt that their appeals for political cooperation had been rudely rejected by these politicians, and that the power struggle between the four of them had become their dominant motivation in place of any concern for national welfare. In the immediate aftermath of the

³⁴ See below on the decision to establish oversight authority for the members of the NSC.

coup, the Generals prohibited all political activity; Mr Demiral and Mr. Ecevit were placed under house arrest for a few days and after being told to desist from all political involvement and statements, were released. Mr. Erbakan and Col Turkes were taken into custody and later charged with crimes against the State.

The Constitutional prohibitions, noted above, which politically banned the former party leaders, also prohibited all former parliamentarians from being involved in the activities of creating and leading new political parties. The Political Parties Law which followed the new Constitution also prohibited any new party from resembling in any fashion or symbol, any of the pre 12 September party organizations.

That the Generals meant to enforce these bans and restrictions became quickly apparent when Mr. Ecevit sharply criticized the military regime in the foreign press in October 1980. He spent the next four months in jail. When the ban on political activity was lifted in April 1983 prior to the parliamentary elections in November, the Generals retained the authority to judge the suitability of party founders and candidates, whether they were banned by the Constitutional restrictions or not. The Generals exercised that authority broadly, to say the least. They vetoed the participation of hundreds of potential party founders and candidates presumably on the basis of their association with the previous party hierarchies. As the Generals also hoped that a sound two party system would evolve, that veto authority was used as a means of controlling the number of emerging political parties. The founders lists of several parties were totally rejected by the NSC, thus ascertaining that that party could not participate in the elections, and therefore, not be represented in the parliament. In the end, three fairly carefully molded parties were allowed to contest the November

1983 elections. All three were moderate and similarly oriented.

While the Generals had, therefore, been successful in recasting the political stage, the question arose as to whether these players were truly representative of the society.³⁵

6. To depoliticize the society. In addition to controlling the political players, the Generals wanted politics removed from the government bureaucracy and societal institutions and associations. That was a tall order as prior to 12 September virtually every such grouping had been permeated and was in fact an active participant in the political maneuvering; unfortunately, they were also the venue for much of the violence, particularly the schools. Using both the Constitution and a special law on associations, the Generals codified their political cleansing. Politics was restricted to political parties. Associations could not have ties of any kind to any political party or ideology. Members of professional associations, including unions, could not play active political roles. Members of the government bureaucracy, civil servants, the police, judges and prosecutors, teaching staffs at universities and schools and professional members of the armed forces could not be members of political parties.³⁶ Inductees, privates, in the armed forces as well as students in military schools could not vote.³⁷ Unions were especially controlled from political activity; strikes which were felt to endanger society or national wealth were prohibited. The press was controlled by legislation which prescribed heavy fines, closings or imprisonment for activities which threatened

³⁵ See the postscript and concluding remarks below. Undoubtedly this decision has been the most controversial.

³⁶ Constitution of the Republic of Turkey, 1982, Article 68.

³⁷ Constitution of the Republic of Turkey, 1982, Article 67.

national security, unity or offended public morality. The state-operated radio and television network was made politically benign. The schools and universities, where education had been totally sublimated to politics in the pre coup era, became stringently apolitical and were brought under an iron fisted centralized control agency. Strong efforts were initiated to create a non political, merit promoted federal bureaucracy.

The Generals rationale for this depoliticalization (they saw it as reform) was very simple - these institutions and associations had lost their basic identities and purpose. Only by focusing them on their reason for existence could they beneficially serve the society. One of the added effects of the decision, in addition to the fact that thousands were dismissed or resigned from these organizations, was a relatively high level of foreign criticism principally from Western European liberal sources. The Generals strongly defended the depoliticalization decisions as appropriate and essential to public tranquillity in a developing and politically immature society such as Turkey's.³⁸

7. To support Ozal economics. The Generals opted for the continuation of the economic reform measures introduced in January 1980 during the last Demiral government. The reforms were proposed and championed by Turgut Ozal, and they centered on the nurturing of free market economics in almost direct opposition to the etatism of the Ataturkian Reforms, which had led to the moribound state owned and operated system of economic enterprises. But the Generals felt that a state operated economy was debilatating to economic growth and

³⁸ Authors memo of conversation with General Nurettin Ersin, May 1984.

stability; in this instance, the soft peddling of the Ataturk legacy was justified by acknowledging that times had changed and that a modern national economy needed to be able to operate in a complex competitive, international market. While the Generals may have understood all this, they were wise enough not to try to lead and effect such reform themselves; Ozal was considered to be an economic innovator and was given responsibility for economic direction of the government.

As has been noted by competent observers³⁹, the Ozal reforms probably would not have succeeded unless a military regime was in control. For the reforms were implemented in large part by decree; and a no-strike, no lock-out edict was very beneficial to the improvement of production in the aftermath of the coup. The reforms called for reduction of state subsidies, the free floating of the currency, tax incentives for private industry and foreign investment, among others. The effect was reduced inflation, and the willingness of foreign banks and lending institutions to again spend money in Turkey. It was not all gravy, however. The lira was very weak internationally, therefore, the cost of foreign products soared. Without subsidies the cost of basics also rose significantly, and wage controls meant that the worker had less to spend.

While the Generals broadly endorsed the Ozal track, they maintained their distance. They more hoped it would work, than they had any strong conviction that it would produce an economic miracle. But no alternative was even remotely viable, and they were willing to give the Ozal reforms a lengthy trial.⁴⁰

³⁹ Interview with Mrs. Arma Jane Karear, formerly the Economics Counselor, US Embassy, Ankara. Washington, D.C., 1 December 1984.

⁴⁰ Ersin interview.

8. To establish a new system of military oversight.

Provisional Article #1 of the 1982 Constitution named the Head of the State (General Evren) to be the President for seven years from the date of the Constitutional approval (November 1982). Provisional Article #2 established a Presidential Council made up of the other four Generals who were the co-leaders of the coup. Their term was to extend for six years from the date of organization of the Grand National Assembly (November 1983). The existence of the Presidential Council as a legal body was to terminate after those six years. As it stands, the next Presidential election will occur in November 1989 and the Presidential Council will fade from the scene at the same time.

As was briefly outlined, the new Constitution gave the President a significantly greater role to play in the affairs of State. Likewise, the Presidential Council has been mandated to provide a general oversight to all national security and peripheral matters. The bottom line is that these five general officers, as of November 1983, all retired and wearing civilian clothes, established the institutional framework from which they can provide military supervision over State politics and administration for the remainder of their terms. Their principle attention will be directed toward traditional military concerns: domestic tranquillity, national security coupled with the preservation of Turkey's western military ties, and the continued emphasis and relevance of the Atatürkian legacy.

This system of military oversight was a new development. In the modern political era since 1950, even though all but one of the Presidents have been retired military, the principal military influence has been exercised through the active duty military establishment - the Chief of the Turkish General Staff and the Force Commanders. General

Evren and his predecessor as Chief TGS General Semih Sancar, were both active and influential players in national policy via their roles in the National Security Council and as Chiefs of the combined Armed Forces. In this new 1983 style of military influence, the active duty force, and its top generals, at least until 1989, will be minor players regarding the traditional military concerns mentioned above. The chief TGS and Force Commanders will be able to focus on their principle professional concern - force modernization. This is not to say that these successors to the coup leaders will be uninfluential. The new active duty military leaders are after all the ultimate force behind this arrangement, and their continued access to, respect for, and candor with President Evren are the keys to its success.

9. To return the military to the barracks. From the very beginning, the coup leaders were sincere about removing the active duty military, including themselves, from political participation in accordance with the tradition of Ataturk described in The Setting, above. Just eighteen days after the coup, September 30, 1980, in a speech delivered to the Army Military Academy cadets, General Evren said:

"My Sons! ..

At this age never get involved with politics. If we are indulged in politics today, it is because we felt that it was our duty to save our country from a disastrous situation, and just like in the past, this was our sole aim. The orders that our great Leader Ataturk has given us have always been in this same spirit. Whenever the Army entered into politics, it began to lose its discipline and, gradually, it was led to

corruption. We can observe its most basic example in our recent history, during the "Balkan War". Therefore, I demand from you once again not to take our present operation as an example to yourselves and never to get involved in politics. We had to implement this operation within a chain of commands and orders to save the Army from politics and to clean it from political dirt. Had we not carried out this operation, the Army would have gotten involved with politics as in the previous examples. I would like to attract your attention to one point: we are working upon this process with a command and order echelon, consisting of five members. We are exerting every effort to prevent those below our echelon from getting involved with those affairs. Furthermore, we are determined that we will return to our real duty as soon as we reinstate our country on truly democratic principles."⁴¹

These remarks are especially noteworthy in that the General openly referred to the fact that the coup was necessary not only to save the nation from disaster, but also because it prevented the military from becoming involved in the political imbroglio of pre 12 September. He emphasized that the coup and administrative takeover were led by the five top Generals, supported by the chain of command, and that lower levels within the military, even now after the takeover, would be restricted from involvement.

At the height of the terrorism prior to 12 September, while martial law was in effect only limitedly throughout the country, approximately half of the active duty army strength of 500 thousand was performing

⁴¹ 12 Sept in Turkey, p. 301/302.
non-military duties, trying to maintain basic law and order despite the

frustrating restrictions imposed by the civilian administrations.⁴² Following the coup, as martial law was declared and enforced country wide, virtually the entire military establishment became involved. However, very quickly, as the terrorists were apprehended and a semblance of domestic order restored, the military sought to turn over these duties to the rural Jandarma and the overhauled national police. The Generals were extremely anxious that this happen as soon as possible, not only to get the military forces out of civil responsibilities, but also to get them back to their neglected and primary duties of training and readiness. That process, while cautious and gradual, resulted in the lifting of martial law in a number of the Western, rural provinces prior to November 1983. As the police became more competent and trustworthy, even in the those provinces where martial law remained in effect, the troop presence and involvement became significantly less.

⁴² Personal memo. A Corps Commander in Eastern Turkey in May 1980 told me that he was actually 100% committed to martial law duties as half his troops patrolled the streets in the daytime, the other half at night.

CHAPTER V

POSTSCRIPT

The parliamentary elections in November 1983 elicited a voter response of over 90%. The campaign leading up to the election was relatively low key, reflecting the political similarities of the three candidates and the fact that virtually all of the politicians with more controversial or divergent political views had been excluded by the Generals' vetoes. Mr. Turgut Ozal and his Motherland Party were able to garner 45% of the popular vote, and due to a percentage system of vote barriers, which excluded independents, Ozal and the MP won 212 seats in the 400 seat parliament. He formed a government of mild conservatives and forayed into the political waters. From the beginning, it was obvious that a loose division of labor had been drawn between President Evren and Prime Minister Ozal. Certainly from a policy point of view, the President held sway on matters of internal security. The question of continuing or discontinuing martial law, the enforcement of the political bans and restrictions, and the occasional issue of a possible pardon for "political prisoners", were all left to the President and his Council of Generals.

On the economic front, Mr. Ozal assumed 100% dominance. His internal program, with a number of controversial and difficult tenets, was fully implemented. As regards foreign economic relationships, Mr. Ozal was left to run his own show. His blatant cultivation and expansion of economic relationships with the Middle East, and particularly Iran and Libya along with much increased trade with the Soviets was uncriticized by the President. The overall direction of foreign policy outside of economics, while initially at

least, a presidential show, seems now to be more shared, with Mr. Ozal, bolstered by his western education and image, becoming more forceful. On his recent trip to the United States, Mr. Ozal sounded the themes of Turkey's relationship with NATO and the U.S., and the country's need for more money and military assistance in the very best military fashion. As regards internal politics, Mr. Ozal has been able to hold together his new coalition of willing, but divergent rightist elements. He still commands a majority of the parliament, and almost certainly retains the loyalty of about half of the Turkish electorate. The recent calls for early elections (the current parliamentary term is five years - until November 1988) have primarily emanated from those politicians who were not allowed to participate in the 1983 elections. It is quite likely that a number of the banned politicians, and in particular Mr. Demiral, are orchestrating this clamor in the hope of resurrecting their own political careers. So far, Mr. Ozal has treated this agitation with bemused disdain; the Generals have been silent, but would probably be less sanguine, if any of the banned politicians were to become more publicly active.

The relationship between the President and the Prime Minister seems to be working well. Though, President Evren was not pleased with Mr. Ozal after their falling out in 1982, and in fact, openly spoke against his candidacy prior to the 1983 election, he has since the election sought to maintain a cordial and cooperative relationship with the Prime Minister. They meet every week privately, face to face, and there is significant evidence that their consultation and cooperation covers the gamut of Turkish public affairs.

The ultimate issues, as always in Turkey, are economics and security. The Ozal economic miracle is yet to occur; inflation is still

too high, unemployment never was reduced (still about 25%), foreign loans and capital investments have been sluggish and real growth rates less than expected. But in the final analysis, economic success in Turkey may be as much a state of mind as it is provable by the statistics; and Mr. Ozal, the President, the military and the Turkish public have retained their confidence that better times are just around the corner. Just how much belt tightening that confidence can withstand is the unknown factor.

Compared to conditions prior to September 1980, the security situation is an unchallengeable miracle. Evidence of that is most simply observed by noting the lifting of that terrible burden of fear and vulnerability that virtually every citizen felt in just venturing into the street. It is dramatic and attention riveting to comprehend a daily toll of twenty violent, random, terrorist murders; it goes almost unnoticed when weeks and months pass without such an incident. Despite that happy contrast, Turkish military and police authorities continue their vigilance, and rightly so. Kurdish unrest in eastern Turkey and integrating that sizeable minority into mainstream Turkish life remains a high level concern. The existence of submerged political terrorists, still supported by anti-Western foreign plotters is certain. And many of the social pressures, which contributed to the growth of the violence remain unrelieved. But overall, domestic tranquillity has been restored. It is viewed as a gift of life by most Turks.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS

My purpose in this final section of the paper is to neither speculate as to why the decisions were made by the Generals, nor to second guess them based on the results to date. Rather, I prefer to offer some random thoughts which occurred to me in the writing; if these meanderings are not profound, hopefully, at least, they are not contradictory.

1. As their most basic purpose, the three Turkish coups have sought to create stability, or perhaps calm is a better word. As the ousted administration has been condemned for either its dereliction of duty or inability to deal with the issues, or both, the seizers of power have evaluated and exercised their temporary license to effect change and hoped that a path to social progress and viable pluralist government could be found. The 1980 Generals had studied the two previous modern era coups and decided that those efforts had been too short in duration, and not sufficiently encompassing. From the 12th of September 1980, it was obvious that a more ambitious plan was being implemented.

2. The Generals felt that a good deal more was at stake in 1980, than had been earlier. Considering Turkey's increasing geo-strategic importance, the chaos in the nearby Middle East and Southwest Asia, the increased aggressiveness of the subliminal Soviet threat, and internally the action/reaction to rapid changes within traditional Turkish society; the Generals intervened with an urgency verging on desperation. It was, in the Generals view, essential that a modern interpretation of the basic Kemalist National Strategy be refocused and retaught within the society. That was their philosophical goal.

3. The most immediate, practical goals were to end the violence and defuze the society. In pursuit of the first goal, a broad campaign of arrest and detention of the perpetrators of violence, of those who were thought to be perpetrators of violence, and of those who were encouragers or even sympathizers of the violent, was implemented. Civil rights and the rules of evidence were not strong constraints in this campaign. As regards the defuzing of society, the Generals took a less harsh track; more as a parent who is scolding and then restricting irresponsible children. It worked in that General Evren's father - knows - best image became a most settling and convincing influence. The society accepted their hand slapping in the best spirit of retribution and willingness to accept parental direction . . . for awhile.

4. External forces of ill will toward Turkey, and the politicians were blamed. While external forces could be dealt with only indirectly, the politicians were present to be challenged. It has been argued that the coup was more anti-Ecevit than it was anti-Demiral. That rationale suggests that Demiral's pro Western and pro NATO foreign stances, and his economic liberalism were more in tune with the Generals views than were Ecevit's socialism, new defense concepts and willingness to excuse the terrorism as social forces at work. The argument has concluded therefore, that the Generals would be sympathetic to Demiral's near term political resurrection. I doubt it. While the military may basically agree with Demiral's policies, and some may even see him as the conservative with the best chance of uniting the splintered political right, the Generals also see their ban on ex-politicians as the most basic and important decision of their tenure. In their view, to suggest that that ban could be overturned would be to not only bring into jeopardy the whole spectrum of political and social constructs

implemented by the Generals, but would also be a disrespectful slap at their dignity, authority and pride.

5. It may be that a new method of military monitorship of Turkey's political scene has evolved in the President's increased political roles. That being true it releases the Chief of the Turkish General Staff, who is Turkey's supreme military authority, to more properly focus on military strategy, planning and readiness. It also follows that the person who assumes the Presidency in November 1989 is most likely to be one of today's leading military figures.

6. Ultimately, the success of any Turkish government depends on its ability to insure domestic tranquillity, to promote and effect economic progress and to remain politically viable and functional in a socially diverse, traditional society beset by the immense pressures of rapid modernization. To suggest that the 1980 version military coup was the final coup in Turkish history, is not correct and reflects ignorance of that history. The future political role of the Turkish military will be directly dependent on the successful achievement of these elements noted above by whatever civilian government is then in power. Given the failure of those elements and the resultant breakdown of functional society, the Generals of the future would be no less willing nor obligated to step in, then were the military leaders of the recent past.

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